

# *Sketch*

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## Forget It

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# Forget It

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## **Abstract**

The intersection where Mary stood waiting was busier than usual. The last day before Christmas...

# Forget It

THE INTERSECTION where Mary stood waiting was busier than usual. The last day before Christmas. The snow was melting a little and the street corner was covered with slush and mud from the farmers' cars. Buicks and Frazers and Fords. Blues and maroons and greens spotted with brown from the mud of the roads. Chains rattling and scraping over the pavement. The farmers walked back and forth past Mary. Farmers in overshoes, with buckles rattling like the chains on their cars. Blue overall legs tucked inside. Brown leather jackets, deep brown, light brown, medium brown.

Mary looked up the street with some irritation. Her feet were cold. They hurt, too. Why couldn't Joe leave the car in one place when they came to town? Why did he have to go driving it all over? He doesn't do anything right anymore, and there's at least another 50 years to go. So Mildred was right after all. All right, Mildred, just don't ever say I told you so. Mary shifted the package with the crystal candlesticks in to the other hand. She hunted through her purse for a handkerchief. She looked again for Joe.

A man was coming toward her. Overshoes with buckles rattling. Blue overall legs tucked inside. Brown leather jacket—light brown. Behind him a woman. My God, the wives! That crimped hair. A woman too busy, too slovenly to put pincurls in her hair at night so it won't look that way. Or maybe it just seems futile. Go to the beauty parlor twice a year and get a permanent. Maybe the \$6 end curl and maybe the \$15 cold wave. It doesn't make much difference. On them it looks the same. Like the stuffing out of our old davenport. The man strode on. Anonymous farmer with anonymous wife. Long strides, wife trotting behind, clutching a shiny black plastic purse. They passed in front of Mary, and the man stopped at the corner to look for cars. His wife came up beside him. Plump. Her coat curving up in the back. The farmer started across the street. His overshoes kicked mud dangerously. The hell

with a little slush and mud. His wife was left behind again. In the middle of the street they stopped to wait for a car to pass. As they started again she caught his arm. He ignored her. As if she had never touched him. They reached the sidewalk and the woman darted behind him. But there was no room between the husband and Galesburg State Bank. She retired to her original position.

There, Mary, is a little prevue of the future. You and Joe, sometime between now and the fiftieth year. She cooks, sews, keep house, probably milks cows and feeds chickens. And he won't let even a few strangers know that she means more than just a convenient laborer. She tries so hard to be "correct" He tries so hard to be—what? Hard.

"Hi, honey. Been waiting long?" Mary jumped at Joe's voice.

"Joe. Did you see that just now? That farmer and his wife."

"You mean that old boy in the leather jacket?" Joe beamed down at her. Pleased with himself for some reason. Probably found a prospective buyer for the old tractor.

"I think that was absolutely cruel."

"You mean because he wouldn't wait for her? That's the place for women, my good woman. Two steps behind her husband always."

Mary didn't feel like retorting. She didn't want to laugh. "I think it was cruel."

"Just because he's in a hurry is no sign he beats her."

"There's cruelty worse than beating."

"O.K., honey. Guess I'll start beating you."

All right Joe. We'll forget it. You'll forget it. I'll try. Forget it. "Let's go home. Where did you leave the car?" she asked.

"It's up by Smithers. Ready to go?"

Mary nodded. And then there was Joe ahead of her. Tall and thin.

"Hey, wait for me." Joe turned around. He waited for her to reach his side. He didn't look at her; he examined the place where he had scratched his finger that morning.

"Like me to carry your package?" He sneaked a little sideways glance at her. Right there, almost in the middle of Main Street, they looked at each other and laughed. "Come on, you. Let's go home," he said.

—Lola Chadwick, H. Ec. So.